

# entertainment

## 'Outsourced' hits close to home for travelers

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"Outsourced," directed by John Jeffcoat, is a light and entertaining movie that follows Todd Anderson (Josh Hamilton) on a business trip to India.

Todd is manager of a call center in Seattle. One day, his boss announces that the company's jobs are being outsourced to India; Todd, therefore, must travel to India and train the future manager of the Indian call center.

The setting changes drastically as Todd arrives in India. The scene fills with music, colors and animation, contrasting sharply with the grimness of America. In the taxi - which looks more like a cross between a golf cart and a Jeep - that leads Todd to his town, he contemplates the scenery, bewildered and disoriented. Eventually, he meets Puru, the "new guy" he is to train. Puru is a friendly, helpful

middle-aged man.

Todd has no knowledge of Indian culture. During his first days, he makes one blunder after another, upsetting his hosts and his call center staff. In fact, Asha, the prettiest and smartest employee, tells him he should "learn about India."

Todd, in turn, must teach his employees how to sound American on the phone. He suggests they tell customers they are calling from "Chicagaago" - pronounced nasally in the true American fashion - and not from India. This request prompts Asha to question why they should pretend they are Americans, if "most of the products they're buying are made in China"

anyways. Todd, unsettled by the irony of the question, mumbles an answer.

Struggling to adapt to the

Indian culture, Todd eventually seeks refuge in a Mac Donnells, an equivalent of America's McDonald's. There, he meets another American, who wisely advises him to stop "resisting India."

This suggestion, combined with Todd's fascination of the Hindu goddess of destruction, marks the turning point of the movie.

Suddenly, Todd finds himself playing with the children in the streets and dancing to a Bollywood movie. He discovers a new way to boost efficiency of the call center, and learns to appreciate his staff. Quite predictably as well, he falls in love with Asha.

Just as Todd finally succeeds in improving the efficiency of the call center, he learns that once again, the jobs have been outsourced. This time, he must go to China. But instead of going himself, Todd lets Puru, who was devastated about losing his job, take his place.

Todd goes back to his old life in the United States. The movie ends just as Todd's phone rings - with a Bollywood ringtone.

If you have ever studied or lived abroad, you will relate to the movie and to Todd in particular. From the disorientation of the first few days, to the feverish search for a taste of home, you probably have experienced it.

Actor Josh Hamilton brilliantly portrays all the emotions that any traveler will have felt: the shock, the frustration and the homesickness.

The Indian actors seem to compensate for Todd's stiffness; they are friendly, open and eager. They stand out with their spontaneity and seem to act almost effortlessly, giving the movie vivacity and gaiety.

"Outsourced" is not just a delightful movie about cultural differences. Under its surface, it raises an important question: As globalization sweeps in, is the world ready for the culture clashes it will bring?

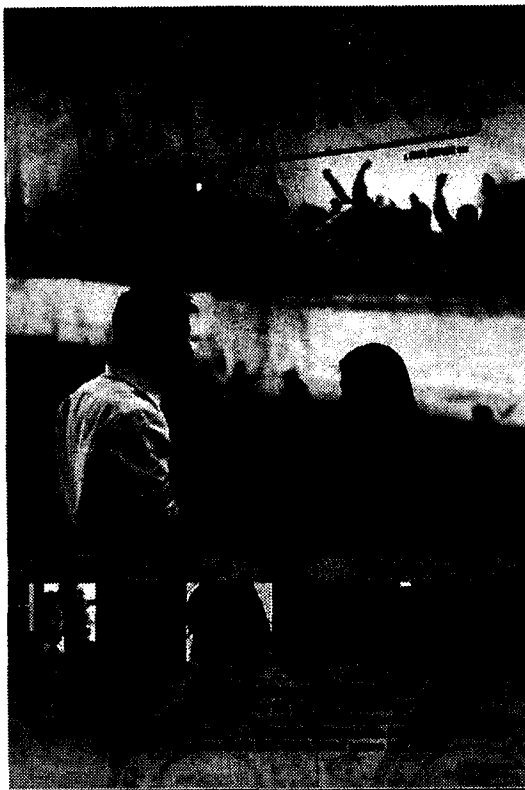


Photo courtesy of Washington.edu

## Palmer goes solo, kills self for new album

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You're crouched in a corner and the lights are all cut off except for the few glints of natural light that graze the hardwood floor. A piano sounds in the distance and wails like unforeseen death. You're shivering already and the chill of the room gives rise to the tiny hairs on your arms as, down the corridor, you see her. Pale as Victorian lace and just as deceptively delicate, lies Amanda Palmer, rest her soul.

The decidedly outspoken half of the internationally regarded duo The Dresden Dolls, Amanda Palmer, has released her first solo album "Who Killed Amanda Palmer?" in a way fans and critics would only expect of her. She died. Well, only for the pictures.

On her new Web site WhoKilledAmandaPalmer.com, Palmer wrote of her new release,

"The record was supposed to be simple. It ended up not being simple at all. This is like my life. I first got the idea to put together a really simple, stripped-down, record-in-my-underwear-in-my-apartment-in-Boston kinda thing."

But, as she said, it ended up being so much more.

Though some may find Palmer's use of her own death as a motif for her album in poor taste, I see it more as a nod to society's unwavering obsession with death and with the celebrity, or just a fun gimmick in which Palmer gets to pose for a whole bunch of glamour shots. Whatever the true point or true meaning of the whole "dying thing," it's irrelevant when set side-by-side to the music of the album.

Even if her death is imaginary, the feeling of chilling beauty invoked by

the album is no ploy. The music itself has the kind of sheen one can only find in well-produced records, but there is an underlying macabre, almost gothic ambience about it. Perhaps it is in part due to the crackly tape recordings Palmer incorporates into the ends of her songs, which hiss and moan like ghosts, much in

the same vein as '90s rocker Poe's 2000 album "Haunted." Or, maybe it's because of the "posthumous" theme of it all that it just ends up being wholly creepy and wholly intoxicating.

It is difficult to choose the standout tracks of "Who Killed Amanda Palmer?" because the entire album plays as an almost unstoppable force. There are hidden connections between unrelated songs, little threads that weave it all together. In a way, the album is impressionistic. Individually, the songs create one image, one splash of color on a canvas, but if you step back a few feet and look at all the songs together, they create one glorious image of unflappable beauty.

The range of styles exhibited is also quite impressive. On a typical Dresden Dolls album there would be two or three types of songs: loud and angry, soft and sad, or cheeky and cheerful. Though Palmer brings all of these commonalities into

her solo work - "Guitar Hero," "Blake Says" and "Oasis" - she also pulls from Rodgers and Hammerstein and a kind of 1920s flapper jazz on songs like "What's the Use of Wond'rin?" and "Have to Drive."

For those who cannot get enough of Palmer's publicity-death, there is a forthcoming picture book compiled by award-winning sci-fi fantasy author Neil Gaiman, who also wrote liner notes for the album, as well as a collection of music videos directed by long-time friend of the Dresden Dolls, Michael Pope. You can even get a t-shirt that reads "I Killed Amanda Palmer," which is totally on my Christmas list.

All in all, "Who Killed Amanda Palmer?" is an album of inspired growth for who is, in my opinion, one of popular music's most talented and promising acts and it will surely leave listeners dying for more.



Photo courtesy of hubarts.com